

Mortality Bites

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Tag to Second Line.

Mortality Bites

****A/N:** Thank you to those who sent me a request for a Second Line Cherri Tag.****** ****Personally,** I really think it would take more than just LaSalle facing a gunmen to get him to realize he's not immortal. It is his job to chase down criminals right and with his character bio, it really didn't make sense to me.****** ****But** for now, I'll run with the canon and probably come up with another response/sequel later that is more fitting of my vision of LaSalle (insert evil laughter).******

****But for now...****

Chris LaSalle had faced several gunmen in his career as a law enforcement officer lots of 'em, some with very big guns, everything from a saw' d off shot gun to a ladies 22. Even a machine gun a time or two. So why was it that everyone was making a big deal out of a whole lot of nothing?

After spending two years in homicide, seven years in Vice and 5 with NCIS having a gun pointed at him was no big deal but yet Percy and Pride seemed to think he should be taking it more seriously.

He just didn't get it.

Now last spring when his girlfriend had been murdered and put out on display in his bedroom so that the bastard who killed her could take a shot, well it was more than a shot, several rounds fired through the windows and walls of his home just to send a message to Pride. Now that had been unnerving. No wait, if he was honest it was devastating , but he'd survived it and come out the other side

unscathed.

Or so it seemed.

Today was just a part of the job. Sure, if the gun had gone off instead of misfiring he might have been looking down from heaven at a bullet in his skull instead of a bruised sternum and a couple of cracked ribs.

Again, he didn't get why Pride had chosen to lecture him instead of reprimanding Percy for letting the interrogation go South.

But she

He knew she would. She was the only person in the entire world who understood his desire to avoid anything that had to do with death and completely emphasized with need to deal with grief in a rather unconventional manner.

"Took you long enough, " Meredith Brody sat at his kitchen table running her index finger around the rim of her wine glass. She'd chosen the only bottle LaSalle had in the house: a sweet red.

"You and Percy left me with all of the paper work, " Chris grinned staving off a grimace as he slipped off his jacket. After doing the politically correct thing and making an appearance at Lt. Murray's Second Line celebration he'd gone straight back to the office to take on the mound of paperwork that had accrued from the case, preferring to finish it up rather than to let it sit until Monday morning.

But Meredith Brody was observant. Better than anyone she knew when he was hurting both emotionally and physically. Tonight was no exception. He was in some sort of discomfort, she could see it on his face.

"Let me see," Brody beckoned, sliding off of her seat. She'd already seen the photos that were now safely tucked away in the closed case file but she needed an up close and personal to make it seem real.

"Oh, c'mon now, not you too," LaSalle was tired of all the fuss and rightly so. He felt as if he were being mother henned to death.

"I'm not Sonja, Chris. You can be real with me," Though the younger woman seemed to be coming around there was still an edge that said she still needed some work. It was obvious however that she cared for the Bama born agent which Brody would take as a good sign that Sonja was ready to start becoming a part of the team.

He sighed in defeat, pulling off his shirt. Merri was right. Beyond anyone he could trust her not to look at him with judgement. There was no need for him to put on a false front of tough guy bravado. Her concern was genuine and ran deep.

"So you went to the doctor after all," she said of the bright white medical tape that now encircled his torso.

"Yep," the faint outline of the tip of the boot was now camouflaged by angry purple bruising. "Ribs are cracked but don't tell Percy. I

don't want tuh give her the upper hand."

"In that case you probably shouldn't be chasing people down. Take a couple of days off." Brody looked at him sympathetically. Running, chasing both Boyd and Hansen through the cemetery had to a bit painful. She had to wonder how he had managed to breathe without it sounding labored or coughing up a lung.

"Like I said--"

"It's nothing, " she finished in a non-accusatory tone. "You've been kicked before and you get shot at every other week. I get it." It was a routine encounter with a hostile suspect, the only difference being he'd been caught off guard and was unprepared when Hansen pointed the gun at his back.

"Yeah"

She cupped his cheek and gave him a chaste kiss. It seemed only natural that she and Chris had ended up in this place. Merri hadn't intended to fall for him when she'd given him Emily's necklace to keep his beloved charm from his dead girlfriend safe. Spending time with him looking after his guarded heart, nature had just taken its course.

Chris didn't exactly understand how it was that he could be love with two women at the same time, one that was dead and gone and the other alive, fighting to keep him grounded but he was too worn down after the day's events to over analyze it.

Brody was here and that was all that matter.

"How about if I make you something to eat?" She smiled watching him roll his eyes.

"That would be nice but ya can't cook," he teased quickly reminding her that all of her good cookware was still packed away in two year old moving boxes. He watched as her cheeks lit up with a rosey pink hue that had started at the base of her neck.

"Well, I'll just go pick us up something then." She didn't even bother to try and deny her lack of culinary talent as she reached for her purse and started for the door.

She started to brush past him when something suddenly caught his attention.

"Hold up a sec," he said reaching for her arm. "Where'd that bottle of wine come from?"

"I found it in the frig." She replied innocently not realizing its significance. And why should she? She had no way of knowing it was_ the bottle_ of wine.

Chris pursed his lips and gave a slight a nod. "I think I need some air."

Brody looked confused as he turned and headed for the courtyard.
"Chris?"

She went to the glass doors and watch him locked his hands behind his head, letting out a huge sigh before crossing over to one of the wrought iron chairs. He stood behind the chair with his fingers hooked over the top.

Merri looked back at the bottle of wine trying to make sense of why it would make her partner react so profoundly but nothing came to her. She stood there a moment more before taking a chance and going out to the courtyard, waiting for him to acknowledge her.

When he didn't she tried another tactic. Well, it really wasn't a tactic per se as much as she would try to appeal to his sense of food. "How does pizza from next door sound?"

"You know on second thought, I'm not really all that hungry," he said still palming the back of the chair, looking like he'd just been kicked (yet again).

Merri's face fell into a mask of concern. However, she knew better than to try and get him to open up. He'd come to her in time she reasoned. "Ok, I think I'll just head on home then, let you rest."

She'd taken exactly two steps when she heard him call out to her.

"Wait," he turned and paused garnering her full attention.

Hands clasped in front her she looked at him expectantly.

Placing his hands on his hips, he looked heavenward, letting out another huge sigh.

"You can tell me, Chris," she prompted softly.

He raked a hand over his mouth, as if he were trying to find the strength. "That uh...bottle uh wine...I bought it for Savannah the night she was..."

/killed/

After he'd called Savannah and told her he was dropping off Cade at the bus station, she'd asked him to pick up a bottle of her favorite red, stating it would go great with the romantic dinner she was fixing and naturally he obliged. Thinking back, that was one of the first things he'd told Pride when he and Brody had shown up at the house with Loretta.

I stopped tuh get wine!

He didn't know exactly why he'd saved it, probably for the same reason her toothbrush and a half bottle of strawberry scent scented body wash were still sitting in his bathroom, waiting to be thrown away.

"I'm so sorry." Brody swallowed, the remorse gathering on her face. "I had no idea."

Chris' hands fell back to hips. He wasn't mad at her, he was upset with himself. "But it's been a year, Brody." There was no reason it

should still be sitting in the refrigerator. "I should of drank that bottle along time ago." It crossed his mind a time or two but he could never actually bring himself to open the bottle. It had sort of become a reminder that he hadn't been able to save the woman he one day wanted to marry.

Now it was Brody's turn to sigh. "When my sister died I held onto several of her things, one being the necklace I gave to you."

"But this is stupid stuff." Chris interjected. A bottle of wine and an old toothbrush didn't have any meaning. They were just useless things.

On several occasions, Merri noticed the pink toothbrush in the bathroom sitting beside his own, giving her cause for suspicion. But given her own experience she never dared to say anything. "It doesn't matter what it is. What matters is how those things remind you of Savannah and the time you spent together."

"But that's just it, I don't want to be reminded anymore." He'd spent last year partying and dating a string of meaningless women trying to forget and forge past the guilt. It wasn't until he had started to form a relationship with Brody that he stopped. Oh, they weren't anywhere near the place they needed to be in terms of dating or having any kind of intimate relationship, but they were comfortable together, sort of like a friend with benefits without taking that final step to sex. Not that Chris wouldn't enjoy making love to her, he surely would. But he rather liked the fact that he could turn to her whenever he needed, and she him. He could hold her hand, and pull her in close just for the sake of having another close human connection. Hours could pass and could do nothing but sit on his couch, content at holding one another, while an old movie played. No strings attached. It wasn't the conventional type of friendship but it was one that he grown rather fond of and wanted to keep.

"That's not how this works," She said gently.

"Then how does it work?" His pretty blue eyes went wide, almost pleading.

"I'm still trying to figure that one out myself," It was sad, but after 8 years she had still trouble finding the closure that she needed to move on. Sadly, catching her sister's killer had done little to help her dissolve the sense of loss she still felt inside for her twin.

"So takin' up a hobby then doesn't work? Chris had to admit, he felt a little relieved about that. As much as he loved Pride, his surrogate father had been wrong about that one. Finding something to put him extra time and energy into just wasn't working for the young agent. On the other hand, neither had sex and booze.

"It hasn't helped me," Brody quipped, "I've tried yoga, repelling, painting miniatures, knitting and of course my crosswords."

"Well, maybe ya should have tried cookin'?" He grinned wolfishly, "or better yet unpacking"

Brody raised an eyebrow. "Opposed to your perpetual partying?"

"Hey now, I'm trying to cut back. I just hit some rough patches every now and then."

Brody dipped her head, sinking her teeth into her bottom lip. "And what about today? Was that a rough patch?"

Chris couldn't help but smirk as he leaned in and tucked a finger under her chin, "It's like I tol' Percy, sometimes ya gotta hit me over the head with a two-by-four tuh get my attention. An' if ya wanna know the truth, Hansen, well he definitely got my attention when he fired that gun. But again, don't tell the newbie. I've got her believin' I'm some sort of Neanderthal."

"Caveman is what I heard," Brody smiled, tangling her fingers with his, "But don't worry, your secrets are safe with me."

A/N: Did anyone else notice that when LaSalle and Percy entered Sgt. Murray's house that it was dark outside? But when they went back to the field office and were wearing the same clothes, it was daylight?

End
file.